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WILLIAM R. GENTRY BACK FROM FRANCE

Nephew of N. T. Gentry Relates Thrilling Story About War at Front.

INJURED IN SERVICE
Drove Transport Motor Four Months—Struck Once by Piece of Shell.

A few weeks out of the rain of shells on the battlefields of France, William R. Gentry, Jr., 19 years old, nephew of N. T. Gentry of Columbia, has returned to St. Louis following an operation in a French hospital for an injury sustained when driving an ammunition truck near Soissons.

He is the son of William R. Gentry, Sr., of Vernon avenue, St. Louis. His parents had received no word from him since the cablegram announcing he would undergo an operation. He surprised them when, unannounced, he appeared at their home and greeted them with "bon soir."

In his four months in France he has been much of the time under fire. He was in a gas attack, witnessed the bombing by Germans of a French hospital, was struck by a piece of shrapnel and on his return voyage his ship was attacked by a submarine.

He interviewed Germans in the French prison camps. They told him they expected the war to end before spring with Germany defeated. The prisoners said decreasing man-power and the virtual starvation of the German civilian population would force the end.

Drove at Night.

He sailed from New York with the Phillips Andover unit and landed at Bordeaux May 8. After his arrival at Paris he was told that a lack of ambulances would make it necessary for him to drive an ammunition truck. After two weeks training in the French manual of arms and military tactics, he was assigned to a truck. He had had no experience with motors except that gained driving his father's automobile. Soon after his truck had become part of an ammunition train running between Soissons and Rheims, he was surprised to find Joseph Desjoe, another St. Louis boy, detailed on his truck.

Among the duties of the St. Louisians was the hauling of shells, hand grenades, torpedoes and detonating fuses to the front. They often hauled 220-millimeter shells, but more frequently carried 75-millimeter shells.

The trucks moved at night except when the fighting was heaviest. They were forced to do this because in daylight the German observation balloons would telephone the location of the trucks to the batteries and a bombardment would ensue. During one period of heavy fighting, Gentry said, he drove his truck twenty hours a day for ten days, now and then catching a few minutes sleep on the truck seat.

Struck by Shell.

Gentry told of his first sensation when under shell fire. He expressed this by saying that he was "dog-gone scared." He said he was driving his truck in the ammunition train, when a shell dropped about 50 yards distant, pieces of it striking him.

"We were so frightened," he said, "that we all stepped on the accelerator at the same time and it is a wonder that our trucks didn't land somewhere over the German lines. After that, though, the shells dropped near us so frequently that we lost our fear. Once when hauling logs for trench reinforcements, a German battery opened on us. The French soldiers, who were unloading the trucks, disappeared quite suddenly, going to their dugouts, but we Americans, probably in a spirit of foolhardiness, remained at our tasks as the shells dropped all about us. The Frenchmen have become adroit at dodging and many often save themselves because of their skill in this."

Gentry said he experienced his first gas attack one night when the ammunition train had been halted for a few minutes at Bourget-et-Comin, a village, now in ruins.

"We were eating our lunch when a mountain trumpeter dashed through the streets blowing a 'gas call.' We rushed for our tool boxes for the gas masks that had been provided. One of the drivers was slow finding his mask and was overcome. After that I always carried by mask on the seat near me and frequently had to use it."

Germans Despondent.

Spare moments were few, Gentry said, but those he had, he used getting interviews around the prison camps. Soldiers and drivers were barred from these prisoners, but he slipped in when a guard he had presented with a pack of cigarettes, looked the other way. Gentry said he could understand German and was able to get the sense of what the prisoners said. They told him that the German soldiers had plenty of food, but the civilian population was suffering for want of it. This condition and Germany's rapidly decreasing man-power would end the war soon, they believed. Some of them said it was a matter of months, but none expected it to last longer than spring.

Among the prisoners he interviewed was a German deserter. He was 45 years old and said he was the father of four children. The prisoner said it was for his family's sake that he had deserted, because he knew it was the

Call for Your Check

The persons and societies named below are a few who saved by buying at CO-OP last year---the entire list of checks issued to last year's purchasers is on display at the CO-OP.

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